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Representations of power in the Polish press discourse (1944–1991). A social semiotic analysis

Słowa kluczowe

wizualna semiotyka społeczna, władza, dyskurs prasowy

Keywords

visual social semiotics, power, press discourse

Introduction

The relationship between discourse and power has sparked the interest of researchers who in their work have been exploring the ways in which language is related to the various aspects of power, be it social or political. Critical discourse analysts in particular have been attuned to the subtleties of how language can be instrumental in conveying ideologically motivated messages. A number of terms or concepts thus become apparent for those working within the critical tradition of discourse studies and which are also crucial for the piece of research presented in this paper, namely, ‘discourse’, ‘critical’, ‘ideology’, and a ‘social and constructionist view of language’. Their understanding within the premise of this study and significance will now be briefly explained before moving on to its objectives and details concerning the data and methods applied in the course of the analysis.

The term ‘discourse’ has been used in many different senses, usually dependent on one’s theoretical standpoint as well as their object of analysis.¹ The following three notions of discourse are particularly close to the understanding of the term assumed in this paper. First, there is Blommaert’s conception of discourse which “comprises all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use.”² Second, Coupland and Jaworski show that “discourse does indeed require us to look at language in both its local and global dimensions [...]. Local instances of language-in-use are rich in socio-cultural significance; large-scale norms, values and ideologies are inscribed in discourse patterns.”³ Finally, there is Fairclough’s conception whereby he proposes to “regard language use as a form of social practice.”⁴ The implications are twofold. First, discourse is viewed as a mode of action, as well as a mode of representation. As well, there is a “dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure.”⁵ “Discourse”, affirms Fairclough, “is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning.”⁶ What all these notions emphasize, and what this study takes an interest in, is the relationship between language and broader social structures and patterns, and the nature of this relationship.

Regarding the term ‘critical’, the understanding of the term herein is close to that of Fowler’s.⁷ When discussing the meaning of critical linguistics, Fowler affirms that to him it “means an enquiry into the relations between signs, meanings and the social and historical conditions which govern the semiotic structure of discourse, using a particular kind of linguistic analysis.”⁸ This particular model of enquiry “has not only to identify, and to label reliably, certain key linguistic constructions; it has to relate them to context in a special way.”⁹ In a similar vein, Blommaert points to the critical dimension of Critical Discourse Analysis which is about “uncovering ways in which social structure relates to discourse patterns (in the form of power relations, ideological effects, and so forth).”¹⁰ Thus, considering the above views of what critical enquiry entails, the present study situates its critical dimension in problematizing the relation between particular discourse patterns, or to be more specific, visual discourse patterns and the particular representations such patterns may give rise to.

¹ Cf. Bob Hodge, Gunther Kress, *Social Semiotics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988); Jay L. Lemke, *Textual Politics: Discourse and Social Dynamics*, 1st ed. (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1995); Theo Van Leeuwen, *Introducing Social Semiotics* (London: Routledge, 2005).

² Jan Blommaert, *Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

³ Nikolas Coupland, Adam Jaworski, „Discourse”, in: Paul Cobley, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Semiotics and Linguistics* (London: Routledge, 2001), 134.

⁴ Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 63–64.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 64.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ Roger Fowler, *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press* (London: Routledge, 1991).

⁸ *Ibidem*, 5.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Blommaert, *Discourse*, 25.

Related to the two terms above is the concept of ‘ideology’. When discussing various press representations along with their possible roles and motivations, the study subscribes to Fairclough’s somewhat broad view, according to which ideologies are “significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities), which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination.”¹¹ This seems to imply, as do others,¹² that ideology is discursively constructed. Finally, the analysis often identifies certain structures as ideologically motivated; ‘ideological’ in this sense suggests that the structures in question might have served the values of those in power, or those ascribing to it.

Finally, and as evident from the understanding of the above notions, the view of language that this study embraces is social, that is language is considered an essentially social phenomenon whose constructionist role cannot be underestimated.

Materials and methods

In relation to the assumptions presented in the previous section, this study’s objective was to examine the means by which the representations of those in positions of power were visually constructed, how the representations in question were instrumental in conveying certain ideologically distinct messages and how they changed at particular moments in the Polish history. In particular, the study looked at the images of the authorities, be it established or newly emerging, as found on the front pages of three Polish dailies, *Trybuna Ludu* [People’s Tribune] – published from 1948 to 1990, the official voice of the authorities and the communist party, *Trybuna* [Tribune] created in place of *Trybuna Ludu* in 1990 as its ideological and institutional successor, and *Gazeta Wyborcza* [Electoral Newspaper] – founded in 1989 “following the conclusion of the Round Table Discussions as an electoral paper with the aim of propagating the opposition’s views prior to the elections.”¹³

The time period considered was that from 1944 to 1991 within which seven periods were chosen, each marking a salient stage in Polish political history, namely¹⁴: 1948–1955 – The building of the Stalinist model of socialism, 1956–1980 – The ‘Classical’ period of the Polish People’s Republic (PRL), 1980–1981 – Period of ‘diarchy’ (official authorities vs. Solidarity), 13.12.1981–21.07.1983 – Martial Law, 1982–1989 – The erosion of the previous system and

¹¹ Fairclough, *Discourse and Social*, 87.

¹² See, e.g., Teun A. Van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: Sage, 1998); Michael Billig, „Stacking the Cards of Ideology: The History of the Sun Souvenir Royal Album”, *Discourse & Society* 1 (1990), 1: 17–37; Michael Billig, *Ideologies and Beliefs* (London: Sage, 1991), as cited in Coupland, Jaworski, „Discourse”, 144.

¹³ Liana Giorgi, *The Post-Socialist Media: What Power the West? The Changing Media Landscape in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), 90.

¹⁴ The division into seven periods is based on Czubiński’s historical analysis (Antoni Czubiński, *Historia Polski XX wieku* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2003)).

its final breakdown, 1990 – The first free democratic presidential elections (22.12.1990), and 1991 – The first free democratic parliamentary elections (27.10.1991). The periods could be represented in a more general manner and mark respectively 1) Creation (1948–1955), 2) Consolidation & establishment (1956–1980), 3) Emergence of an alternative force (1980–1981), 4) Reestablishment of the old force (13.12.1981–21.07.1983), 5) Erosion and final breakdown (1982–1989), and finally, 6) Creation of the new system, followed by the end of the transformation (22.12.1990 and 27.10.1991). Within each of the periods above, one suitably representative year was chosen; therefore, the sampling includes 1950, 1960, 1980, 1982, 1989, 1990 and 1991. Within a particular year, the first issue of each month was chosen. The selection procedure resulted in a data set of 115 newspaper issues, of which only the front pages were considered for the analysis. The images of the authorities that the present study examined were exclusively, those found on the front pages in question, which resulted in a set of 43 images.

The images were then surveyed using the framework proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen in their book *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*¹⁵ in which they describe “the semiotic resources of images and analyse how these resources can be configured to design interpersonal meaning, to present the world in specific ways, and to realize coherence.”¹⁶

Interpersonal (interactive) meaning is realised by ‘contact’, ‘distance’, and ‘point of view’, which combine to create a relationship between the viewer and the represented. Regarding ‘contact’, there are images which address the viewer by directly looking at their eyes, so called ‘demand’¹⁷ images, and those which do not establish that imaginary contact, so called ‘offer’¹⁸ images. The major significance of the choice between ‘demand’ and ‘offer’ images is that of engagement with the represented or its lack, but also the role assigned to the viewer, who, in the case of ‘offer’ images becomes the subject observing the represented in an impersonal way.¹⁹ ‘Distance’ refers to the “size of frame” whose choice implies a different symbolic relationship between the image and the viewer.²⁰ The basic distinction here is between ‘close-up’ indicating a personal or intimate relationship, ‘medium shot’ which suggests a social relationship and ‘long shot’ implying an impersonal relation.²¹ ‘Point of view’ on the other hand, is related to the use of vertical and horizontal angles. The vertical angles are all about power differences between the viewer and the represented participants. ‘High angle’ signifies the power of the viewer, ‘low angle’ in turn suggests that the represented

¹⁵ Gunther Kress, Theo Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁶ Carey Jewitt, „Different Approaches to Multimodality”, in: Carey Jewitt, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2009), 29.

¹⁷ Kress, Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 118.

¹⁸ Ibidem, 119.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Ibidem, 124.

²¹ Carey Jewitt, Rumiko Oyama, „Visual Meaning: A Social Semiotic Approach”, in: Theo van Leeuwen, Carey Jewitt, ed., *Handbook of Visual Analysis* (London: Sage, 2001), 146.

have power over the viewer, while ‘eye level’ means equality.²² Regarding the horizontal angle, the distinction is that between frontal depictions which mean engagement and profile images which mean detachment.²³

‘Narrative’ and ‘conceptual structures’ are, in turn, key to conveying representational meaning. The former are characterized by the presence of a vector, a line connecting represented participants. The latter do not have vectors.²⁴ In consequence, ‘narrative’ structures present actions involving an ‘actor’ (a participant from whom/which the vector emerges) and a ‘goal’ (a participant at whom the vector is pointed), so called ‘transactive’ actions, or ‘non-transactive’ where the ‘goal’ is absent.²⁵ Similarly, a reaction, characterized by the presence of the eyeline, a special kind of vector, can also be transactive, whereby we see both the person looking and the object of their look, or non-transactive featuring only the person who is looking.²⁶ On the other hand, the purpose of ‘conceptual’ structures is to describe the represented in terms of their general qualities, their essence.²⁷ Images which are conceptual “visually ‘define’ or ‘analyse’ or ‘classify’ people, places and things.”²⁸ When it comes to representational meaning then, the choice is that between representing something in terms of the ‘doings’ or in terms of their more stable, general characteristics.

Compositional meaning is realised through three semiotic resources, namely ‘information value’, ‘framing’, and ‘salience’.²⁹ With respect to information value, the elements are assigned a different value depending on their placement. There are three major types of placements. In a ‘given/new’ structure, the elements placed on the left are presented as ‘given’, i.e. familiar, known to the viewer, while the elements placed on the right are considered ‘new’, i.e., not yet known, problematic, the crucial point. In an ‘ideal/real’ structure, the element on top is presented as ‘ideal’, namely, the generalized essence or model, while the element at the bottom is considered ‘real’, i.e., more specific, practical. Finally, the ‘centre/margin’ structure presents one element as central, the most important element to which other elements are subservient.³⁰ Framing, another compositional resource, is realized by the degree of connection or disconnection of elements which are then read as either belonging together or as separate entities.³¹ Salience, the third signifying system, is achieved by making some elements stand out from the rest of the image through size or colour, for example.³²

²² Ibidem, 136.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Kress, Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 59.

²⁵ Jewitt, Oyama, „Visual Meaning”, 142–143.

²⁶ Ibidem, 143.

²⁷ Kress, Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 79.

²⁸ Jewitt, Oyama, „Visual Meaning”, 143.

²⁹ Ibidem, 147–151.

³⁰ Ibidem, 148–149.

³¹ Ibidem, 149–150.

³² Ibidem, 150–151.

Another aspect of representation which this study takes account of is ‘modality’, an interpersonal resource concerning the truth value of the represented and which is judged according to various definitions of modality, for instance naturalistic or scientific modality.³³ The closer the image is to what can be seen of it in reality, the higher its naturalistic modality. Scientific modality in turn, is judged based on how things are or can be represented in general. Hence, the further the image gets from naturalism, the higher its scientific modality. Lack of depth, detail, and colour are some of the resources of scientific modality.³⁴

The explanation of three meanings alongside their semiotic resources serves the needs of the analysis below but is by no means exhaustive. The reader is thus encouraged to refer to the source text for more detailed explanation of each of the resources just mentioned. What is important about the framework from the perspective of this study is that it provides the means to describe “available choices and visual semiotic resources as having meaning potentials and to show how choices of visual semiotic resources can be used to communicate ideologies and discourses.”³⁵ The study then takes interest in the choice of semiotic resources at the visual level, pertaining to the three types of meaning, i.e. representational, interactive and compositional, as well as their patterns over time and suggests the possible motivations behind the choices within a changing historical context.

Before discussing the findings, two remarks need to be made. First, with respect to the visuals included in the present paper, they were not, on the whole, reproduced in their original sizes for technical reasons. Second, a remark has to be made regarding the nature of the visual material under investigation. What is termed throughout this study as images or visuals includes all sorts of visual material which has been found on the newspaper front pages, namely photographs, graphic images, as well as caricatures. Also, all of them have been approached in the present study as instances of what Kress and Van Leeuwen deem ‘pictures’ (i.e. any form of constructed and framed image). The argument behind such an approach is that newspaper pictures never simply capture actions or the world in general but render the world in a particular way. In the words of Kress and Van Leeuwen³⁶:

Visual structures do not simply reproduce the structures of ‘reality’. On the contrary, they produce images of reality which are bound up with the interests of the social institutions within which the images are produced, circulated and read. They are ideological.

³³ Ibidem, 151.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Jewitt, „Different Approaches”, 29.

³⁶ Kress, Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 47; see also, for example, Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* (London: Sage, 2007), 2, or Douglas R. Nickel, „Impressed by Nature’s Hand: Photography and Authorship”, in: Richard Howells, Robert W. Matson, ed., *Using Visual Evidence* (Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press, 2009), 42.

The workings of such visual structures and how they rendered the representations of the authorities are the subject matter of this study.

The section that follows presents and discusses the results of the analysis. The discussion in particular, concerns general tendencies concerning the images under analysis, as well as individual cases that seemed indicative of the times and telling with regard to the political circumstances. The discussion is organized according to the time periods. This was done to examine how and which patterns of representation changed over time.

Results and discussion

1950 – The building of Stalinist model of socialism (‘Creation’)

Trybuna Ludu [People’s Tribune]

One striking feature of images from 1950 concerns the way the authorities are represented, particularly with respect to the positioning of the viewer, or to use Holly’s term the ‘logic of figuration’.³⁷ When depicted in groups, for example, during official meetings (see Figure 1), they are often represented (or most of the characters in the photo) from the side (‘profile’). This particular use of a ‘horizontal angle’, in turn, creates a degree of disconnection, as the viewer both literally and figuratively remains on the sidelines. Rarely do the members of the authorities in such group representations face the reader directly. Our inability to perceive them, in terms of their more individual features, indicates a degree of generality. Moreover, the similar kinds of settings used, the manner in which the figures are positioned, and the similar poses they assume further enhances their depiction as a group rather than as individuals.³⁸ Also, the use of a ‘vertical angle’ – low angle in particular – suggesting the power of the image over the viewer further adds to these detached representations of the authorities. Figure 1 exemplifying the group representations of the authorities should also be noted for one of its details. The room where the party meeting is taking place features Bierut³⁹’s portrait. When discussing Leninist ‘monumental’ propaganda, Kruk⁴⁰ refers to similar cases where Lenin’s

³⁷ Michael Ann Holly, *Past Looking: Historical Imagination and the Rhetoric of the Image* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), as cited in: Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 46.

³⁸ See Theo Van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 144, and David Machin, „Visual Discourses of War: Multimodal Analysis of Photographs of the Iraq Occupation”, in: Adam Hodges, Chad Nilep, ed., *Discourse, War and Terrorism* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007a), 125–130.

³⁹ Bolesław Bierut (born April 18, 1892, Rury Jeżuickie, near Lublin, Poland – died March 12, 1956, Moscow, Russia, U.S.S.R.), statesman and Communist Party official who came to be called the Stalin of Poland after playing a major role in his party’s takeover of the Polish government after World War II („Bolesław Bierut”, Encyclopaedia Britannica, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Boleslaw-Bierut>, accessed: 19.09.2023).

⁴⁰ Sergei Kruk, „Semiotics of Visual Iconicity in Leninist ‘Monumental’ Propaganda”, *Visual Communication* 7 (2008), 1: 27–56.

portrait would be included in paintings depicting Stalin or a Stalin's portrait included in paintings presenting the everyday life of ordinary people. In all those cases, claims Kruk, the inclusion of portraits was to prove and secure the presence of the leaders.

The form of representation changes, however, in the case of political leaders when the photo is of them alone (see for example Figure 2 and 3). The first noticeable difference concerns the kind of representational patterns used. While in the case of group representations of members of the authorities, the pattern would be that of 'narrative structure', individual representations of political leaders would more often suggest a 'conceptual structure'. This kind of depiction suggests that characters are depicted in terms of their more generalized, timeless essence; they are not represented as doing something, but as being something, or meaning something. This 'conceptual' character of representation is further emphasized through a low level of modality that is primarily indicated by a low degree of articulation in the background, which, according to Machin,⁴¹ results in a number of effects which can be illustrated in the example of Figure 2 and 3. In both of these images, the background is not articulated at all, and is just a blank space. This kind of decontextualization allows that the meaning in these two photos is done solely by the character of the image but may also suggest a special focus on a participant's thoughts. Such decontextualized settings may also allow for a greater symbolic value to be attached to participants. A low degree of articulation of detail, in general, results in greater emphasis being placed on the subjects. Though similar, the two images engage the viewer differently, as Stalin's side-on view (so called 'offer' type of depiction) is more detached. Scollon and Scollon compare Kress and Van Leeuwen's⁴² 'offer' to what Goffman called 'civil inattention' wherein "[w]ith one's eyes cast aside it opens the full personal front to examination by the other person socially present."⁴³ And so also, Stalin's pose, looking up into the distance, further adds to that detachment. His off-frame gaze allows the viewer to engage with his feelings, which may, at the same time, mean focusing more on the character's emotions rather than on his individual features. Mao Tse tung, on the other hand, directly addresses the viewer. Scollon and Scollon claim that the 'demand', as indeed in the previous instance of 'offer', derives from a social interaction, and serves as the "first move in opening up interaction space in the social world."⁴⁴ The 'demand' image of Mao Tse tung then creates symbolic contact between the depicted and the viewer.

⁴¹ David Machin, *Introduction to Multimodal Analysis* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2007b), 51–52. See also Machin, „Visual Discourses”, 138.

⁴² Gunther Kress, Theo Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (London: Routledge, 1996), 119.

⁴³ Ron Scollon, Suzie W. Scollon, *Discourses in Place* (London: Routledge, 2003), 96.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.



Figure 1. *Trybuna Ludu* nr 209 (581). Rok III, 1 sierpnia/August 1, 1950
(‘II Warsaw Conference of Polish United Workers’ Party’)



Figure 2. *Trybuna Ludu* nr 119 (491). Rok III, 1 maja/May 1, 1950
(Stalin)



Figure 3. *Trybuna Ludu* nr 270 (641). Rok III, 1 października/October 1, 1950
(Mao tse Tung)

1960 – The Classical period of the Polish People’s Republic (‘Consolidation & establishment’)

Trybuna Ludu [People’s Tribune]

In the year 1960 group representations of members of the government, such as those found in 1950, are absent, while conceptual, low modality images of individual political leaders tend to give way to narrative structures of higher modality (see Figure 4 below). These, through their side-on depictions or lack of eye contact, do not directly engage the viewer. A photo found in the April issue (see Figure 5 below) is a somewhat unusual example of how a political leader might have been represented at this particular time or in general. The image in question is a ‘close-up’ of a crowd of people in Marseille (‘non-transactive reactors’) who, as we learn from the caption, are saluting the Soviet Prime Minister,⁴⁵ Khrushchev. It is only the cheering crowd, however, which is represented. Thus, Khrushchev, who is absent from the photo, is ‘conjured up’, and his presence is signified by the crowd.

⁴⁵ Nikita Khrushchev, in full Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev (born April 17 [April 5, Old Style], 1894, Kalinovka, Russia – died September 11, 1971, Moscow, Russia, Soviet Union), first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1953–64) and premier of the Soviet Union (1958–64) whose policy of de-Stalinization had widespread repercussions throughout the communist world. In foreign affairs, he pursued a policy of “peaceful coexistence” with the capitalist West (Frank B. Gibney, „Nikita Krushchev”, Encyclopaedia Britannica, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nikita-Sergeyevich-Khrushchev>, accessed: 19.09.2023).



Figure 4. *Trybuna Ludu* nr 181 (4132). Rok XIII, 1 lipca/July 1, 1960 ('Prime Minister N.S. Khrushchev and president of Austria A. Schaerf')



Figure 5. *Trybuna Ludu* nr 92 (4043). Rok XIII, 1 kwietnia/April 1, 1960 ('Here is a photo from Marseille. Residents of this city are cheering USSR Prime Minister')

1980 – Period of diarchy (Emergence of an alternative force (Solidarity movement))

Trybuna Ludu [People's Tribune]

In 1980, one notices yet another change regarding the representation of the authorities. First, we have images of authorities as group members as well as photos of individuals. Second, the way the viewer is positioned in relation to people in the image has also changed. Although in the majority of cases authorities are still depicted from the side (in profile) and in the form of an 'offer' (no direct contact), the size of the frame of these depictions changes and we see mostly 'medium' range shots (cutting off the human figure somewhere between the waist and the knees). It is argued that this distance signifies social relationships.⁴⁶ Scollon and Scollon⁴⁷ compare the concept of a 'distance' in images to Hall's 'personal' vs. 'public' space, affirming that:

[...] a close-up full-head shot visually represents Hall's 'personal' or even 'intimate' space, depending on just how large the close-up shot is. Alternatively, Hall's public space is represented in visual images by full, head-to-toe shots at some distance.

It seems that in this case, the photos suggest a greater degree of relationship between the authorities and the viewer by virtue of their use of medium shots (see Figure 6).



Figure 6. *Trybuna Ludu* nr 78 (11086). Rok wydania XXXII, 1 kwietnia/April 1, 1980 (meeting of Gierek and L. van Geyt, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Belgium)

⁴⁶ See, for example, Machin, *Introduction*, 2007b, or Jewitt, Oyama, „Visual Meaning”, 2001.

⁴⁷ Scollon, Scollon, *Discourses*, 84.

Individual members of the government, in particular political leaders, are presented in 1980 amongst working people. Figures 7 and 8, both of which present Edward Gierek⁴⁸ as he is visiting factories in Warsaw and Miastko, illustrate this tendency.



Figure 7. *Trybuna Ludu* nr 103 (11111). Rok wydania XXXII, 1 maja/May 1, 1980 ('In photo: Edward Gierek among the factory staff of M. Nowotko Warsaw Works')



Figure 8. *Trybuna Ludu* nr 129 (11137). Rok XXXII, 31 maja/1 czerwca (May 31/June 1), 1980 ('During the visit in the Glove and leather clothing factory in Miastko')

⁴⁸ Edward Gierek (born January 6, 1913, Porąbka, Poland, Austria-Hungary – died July 29, 2001, Cieszyn, Poland), Communist Party organizer and leader in Poland, who served as first secretary from 1970 to 1980 („Edward Gierek”, Encyclopaedia Britannica, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edward-Gierek>, accessed: 19.09.2023).

1982 – Reestablishment of the old force (Martial Law)

Trybuna Ludu [People's Tribune]

No photographs of the authorities were found in the analysed sample from the year 1982. The two photographs found worth mentioning though, especially if we consider the political situation at the time, namely martial law when the reputation and influence of the authorities could be damaged, featured a group of miners (Figure 9) and soldiers (Figure 10). Figure 9 is a more frontal and less distanced image, encouraging the viewer to see those depicted more as individuals, rather than as a group. Figure 10, due to a greater degree of distance and the adoption of a profile shot, presents the soldiers as a group. The newspaper then, decides to portray the two groups in a way which increases the individuality of the former (greater intimacy), while decreasing it with respect to the latter (greater anonymity). The strategy in question could be said to be indicative of the newspaper's stance on the prevailing situation and as such, is interesting when one considers the fact that both parties portrayed were on opposite sides in the ongoing conflict at the time and were to face further confrontation in the near future. Finally, the absence of the photographs featuring the authorities is in itself telling. Van Leeuwen⁴⁹ discusses the significance of exclusion, i.e. “not representing people at all in contexts where, in reality, they are present” as one of the strategies for “visually representing people as ‘others’”. Considering the local context and the fact that the newspaper itself was the authorities' mouthpiece, ‘excluding’ them(selves) from the depictions in such a critical political time seems strategic and motivated by the political goals.



Figure 9. *Trybuna Ludu* nr 1 (11625). Rok XXXIV, 2–3 stycznia/January 2–3, 1982
(‘In photo: night shift is leaving the mine, day shift is going down’)

⁴⁹ Van Leeuwen, *Discourse*, 147.

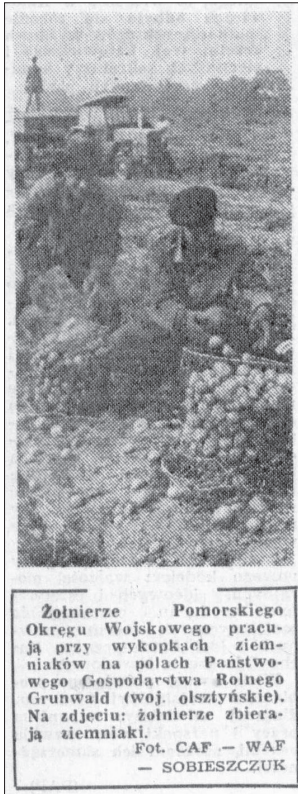


Figure 10. *Trybuna Ludu* nr 233 (11857). Rok wydania XXXV, 1 października/October 1, 1982
(‘In photo: soldiers are picking potatoes’)

Zołnierze Pomorskiego Okręgu Wojskowego pracują przy wykopkach ziemniaków na polach Państwowego Gospodarstwa Rolnego Grunwald (woj. olsztyńskie). Na zdjęciu: żołnierze zbierają ziemniaki.
Fot. CAF – WAF
– SOBIESZCZUK

1989 – Erosion of the previous system and its final breakdown

Trybuna Ludu [People’s Tribune]

A change in the way the authorities are presented in 1989 particularly concerns group depictions of members of the authorities found in *Trybuna Ludu* in this year. In contrast to 1980, their representations are more narrative in character, and more distant (‘distance’) while the side-on depictions (‘horizontal angle’) continue, creating a sense of detachment from the viewer. At the same time, we could say that the ‘offer’ depiction/absence of direct address invites the reader to look at the image but may also mean that there is no need to engage the viewer in a relationship with the authorities (see Figure 11). However, as we can see in Figure 12, when individual members of the State authorities are depicted, it is usually in a medium shot, thereby suggesting a social relationship, though they do not establish direct contact with the viewer.



Figure 11. *Trybuna Ludu* nr 27 (13794). Rok wydania XLI, 1 lutego/February 1, 1989
(‘End of two-day convention of Sejm’ [a Lower House of Parliament])



Figure 12. *Trybuna Ludu* nr 101 (13868), 29 kwietnia – 1 maja/April 29–May 1, 1989
(‘Meeting Jaruzelski – Gorbachev’)

Gazeta Wyborcza [Electoral Newspaper]

The very first issue of *Gazeta Wyborcza*⁵⁰ in 1989 features a photo of Lech Wałęsa⁵¹ (Figure 13). It could remind some readers of similar images of political leaders which they saw in 1950. Like those images of the past, Wałęsa is shown with a very low degree of background articulation; the background is not, in fact, articulated at all, and is just a blank space on which a close up shot of Wałęsa is set. It also takes the same position on the page, namely ‘New/Ideal’ (‘New’ as in “not yet known to the reader, hence as the crucial point of the message”⁵² and ‘Ideal’ meaning “presented as the idealized or generalized essence of the information.”⁵³ What changes, however, is Wałęsa’s pose. Participants in images in 1950 usually assumed a straight pose. They were either confronting the viewer directly or, when portrayed from the side, looking upwards and into the distance. The facial expression additionally informed the quality of the depiction. All these resources served to connote such features as greatness, confidence and leadership, while the frontal depiction in some of the images could be said to signify a certain degree of power with respect to the viewer. The image of Wałęsa, on the other hand, captures him from the side. He looks as if he was talking to somebody or gesticulating. He is neither looking upwards or downwards, but rather straight ahead. His off-frame gaze allows the viewer to associate with the theme of what he is talking about (contained below the photo is a short text written by Wałęsa), while his signature, situated below the text, as well as the direct quotation placed on his right, assist in further personalizing his message. He is not imposing himself; rather he may be apprehended by the viewer as more conciliatory or open to negotiation. As such, this is a photo of a political leader trying to make his case. Wałęsa’s image is also distinctive when compared to all the previous images of political leaders, i.e., he is portrayed as if he was literally leaving its frame, a quality that makes this image an animated one as opposed to the very static portrayals, typical of the previous periods.

Other members of Solidarity, and the various foreign politicians associated with them, were presented in medium shots that suggested a particular social relationship between them and the viewer. Most of them, however, were depicted in the form of an ‘offer’, and so did not address the viewer directly. Also, the photos in question took the ‘Ideal’ part on the page, while the accompanying caption formed the ‘Real’ part (‘Real’ meaning “more

⁵⁰ *Gazeta Wyborcza*’s first issue dates to May 8, 1989.

⁵¹ Lech Wałęsa (born September 29, 1943, Popowo, near Włocławek, Poland), labour activist who helped form and led (1980–90) communist Poland’s first independent trade union, Solidarity. The charismatic leader of millions of Polish workers, he went on to become the president of Poland (1990–95). He received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1983 („Lech Wałęsa”, Encyclopaedia Britannica, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lech-Walesa>, accessed: 19.09.2023).

⁵² Gunther Kress, Theo Van Leeuwen, „Front Pages: (The Critical) Analysis of Newspaper Layout”, in: Allan Bell, Peter Garrett, ed., *Approaches to Media Discourse* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 189.

⁵³ Kress, Van Leeuwen, „Front Pages: (The Critical) Analysis”, 193.

specific information,” “more ‘down to earth’ information”⁵⁴) (see for example Figure 14). Figure 15 is a distinctive cartoon representation of an unidentified member of the authorities. The image, accompanied by a kind of exclamation question ‘That is: How to fight the crisis!’, contains symbols belonging to two ideologically distinct orders, namely, two land-line telephones symbolically representing the old status quo, and a cross, a religious symbol that would have otherwise so far been banned from the official politics, but whose presence and meaning are at least visually acknowledged by the newspaper whose role was that of an advocate of change.



Figure 13. *Gazeta Wyborcza* (1/89), 8 maja/May 8, 1989
(‘If we want things to be different, we need to win this election’)

⁵⁴ Ibidem.



Figure 14. *Gazeta Wyborcza* nr 39, 1–3 lipca/July 1–3, 1989
(‘Bush is announcing help’)



Figure 15. *Gazeta Wyborcza* nr 60, 1 sierpnia/August 1, 1989
(‘That is: how to fight the crisis!’)

22.12.1990 – The first free democratic presidential elections

Trybuna [Tribune]

Figure 16 presents a ‘close-up’ of two left-wing politicians involved in a conversation. The article concerns the talks between members of the Left. It is the first photo of its kind, both when compared to *Trybuna Ludu*’s and *Gazeta Wyborcza*’s photographs, suggesting an almost ‘intimate’ atmosphere between the various politicians, while the use of a depiction from the side invites the viewer to just observe the two of them. Figure 17 is again a somewhat unique representation of what used to be subordinated to the communist regime under the name of ‘Milicja’. The image depicting the members of what was from 1990 on called ‘Policja’, escorting the protesting farmers is a narrative, side on, eye level image potentially serving as the newspaper’s reminder of its once, infamous past, especially considering the ‘forceful’ context of this particular representation. Figure 18 is an example of the now continuing trend of cartoon depictions. The purpose of this grotesque, low modality depiction accompanied by the caption ‘We will risk changing the wheels for the triangular ones’ is to illustrate, as we learn from the article, the situation of political impasse.



Figure 16. *Trybuna* nr 1. Rok wydania I, 12. II/February 12, 1990
(Two left-wing politicians, Leszek Miller (left) and Aleksander Kwaśniewski (right)).



Figure 17. *Trybuna* nr 115. Rok wydania I, 30 czerwca/1 lipca (June 30/July 1), 1990
(‘Police officers are escorting the protesting farmers’)

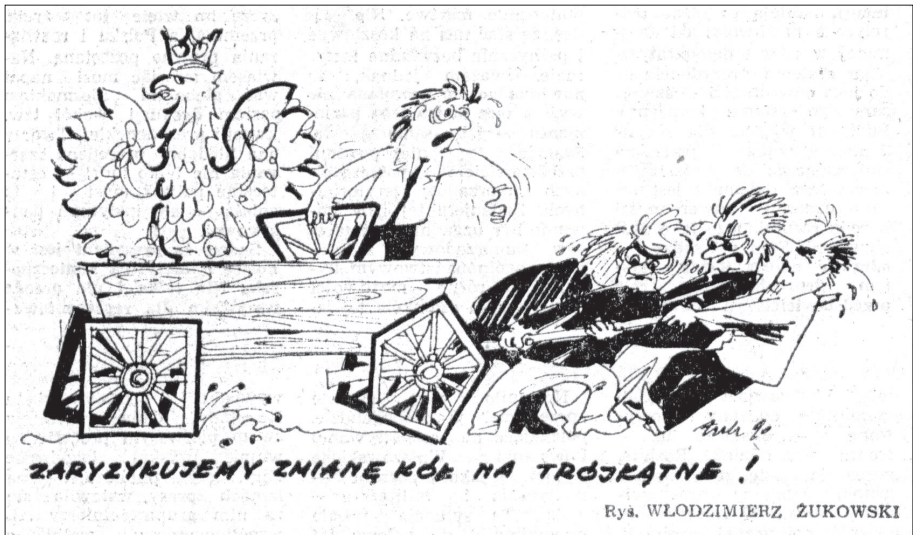


Figure 18. *Trybuna* nr 142. Rok wydania I, 1 sierpnia/August 1, 1990
(‘We will risk changing the wheels for the triangular ones’)

Gazeta Wyborcza [Electoral Newspaper]

Two images from 1990 further exemplify the trends already present in the previous year under analysis. Figure 19 is a cartoon representation of a boat (similar to the Biblical Noah's Arc) with people on its deck, and Lech Wałęsa at its helm. There is a sign on the side of the boat which says 'Solidarity'. The image accompanies the article whose headline reads 'We from Solidarity' and which itself concerns the anniversary of September, 1980.⁵⁵ What seems interesting is the way the low modality and intertextual quality (Biblical reference), or, to use a more encompassing term, that of 'semiotic spanning',⁵⁶ combine in a single image. Figure 20, which presents Tadeusz Mazowiecki,⁵⁷ the presidential candidate for the upcoming elections, is an example of an image where meaning is achieved primarily through an actor. Mazowiecki is depicted in a long shot as he is walking to 'the left of the page', so to speak. The degree of background articulation, is here, the most minimal, a blank background, which allows meaning to be created through the depiction of an actor. This, combined with the image's position on the page, 'New/Ideal', and the fact that the participant is shown as he is walking in the direction of the 'established' side (left/'Given' i.e., "a familiar and agreed departure point for the message"⁵⁸), could be said to be a portrayal of a potential candidate as he is turning to his new role as president. It is also interesting to see how this particular depiction of Mazowiecki extends in a way or reflects his words contained in the accompanying article, particularly the following: 'I refer here to Poland that is sensible, to Poland that is **on the way to** improvement ...' [emphasis mine]. Thus, Mazowiecki's photo seems to illustrate this 'on the way' quality, while his pose and gestures further add to the actuality of the proposition he is describing.

⁵⁵ Solidarity, Polish trade union that in the early 1980s became the first independent labour union in a country belonging to the Soviet bloc. Solidarity was founded in September 1980, was forcibly suppressed by the Polish government in December 1981, and reemerged in 1989 to become the first opposition movement to participate in free elections in a Soviet-bloc nation since the 1940s („Solidarity”, Encyclopaedia Britannica, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Solidarity>, accessed: 19.09.2023).

⁵⁶ Eija Ventola, „Semiotic Spanning at Conferences: Cohesion and Coherence in and across Conference Papers and Their Discussions”, in: Wolfram Bublitz et al., ed., *Coherence in Spoken and Written Discourse: How to Create It and How to Transcribe It* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1999), 113, as cited in Maria J. Pinar Sanz, „Decoding Meaning in Political Cartoons”, in: Carys Jones, Eija Ventola, ed., *From Language to Multimodality: New Developments in the Study of Ideational Meaning* (London/Oakville: Equinox Publishing, 2008), 316.

⁵⁷ Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Polish journalist and Solidarity official who in 1989 became the first noncommunist premier of an Eastern European country since the late 1940s („Tadeusz Mazowiecki”, Encyclopaedia Britannica, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tadeusz-Mazowiecki>, accessed: 19.09.2023).

⁵⁸ Kress, Van Leeuwen, „Front Pages: (The Critical) Analysis”, 189.



Figure 19. *Gazeta Wyborcza* nr 203, 1–2 września/September 1–2, 1990 (“We from “Solidarity””)



Figure 20. *Gazeta Wyborcza* nr 254 (421), 31 października/1 listopada (October 31/November 1), 1990 (Tadeusz Mazowiecki)

27.10.1991 – First free democratic elections for Sejm and Senat (parliament)

Trybuna [Tribune]

The changes characteristic of the two previous periods, continue in the following one. Figure 21 presents a medium shot of Lech Wałęsa. It is interesting in that it seems that the image works against the content of the written message. The article it accompanies comments on the first one hundred days of Wałęsa as president and is rather negative in tone. The image, however, suggests something to the contrary. We see Wałęsa in an upright pose. His gesture suggests that he is taking an oath. Decontextualization allows the exclusive focus on the actor, while his posture suggests as he is looking outwards to the horizon that we are looking at somebody successful and confident about the future. It is hard to say exactly why the newspaper would choose an image that visually seems to be contradicting the message conveyed by the article. One possible explanation could be that by choosing the image the newspaper might have wanted to point even more to the incongruity between the confident image of president and his supposed failure to deliver, as alleged by the newspaper.



Figure 21. *Trybuna* nr 76 (342). Rok wydania II, 30 marca/1 kwietnia (March 30/April 1), 1991 (Lech Wałęsa)

Figure 22 and Figure 23 both present Prime Minister Jan Bielecki.⁵⁹ They do so, however, by means of two different genres and modalities. The former, featured on August 31/September 1, on the occasion of Bielecki's resignation, is a photograph of him as he is speaking in Parliament. Beneath the photo is part of his actual words saying '...nie zgadzam się być figurantem...' [I will not be a puppet politician]. The latter featured three months later, when it was known that his resignation would be officially accepted by one of the Parliament chambers and the president himself, presents Bielecki as he is being 'walked home' (?) by most probably the Speaker at the time, Wiesław Chrzanowski (?) or Margaret Thatcher (?). Thus, we have a 'real life' photograph versus a cartoon representation of the same public figure featured at different times. It may be that there is a relation here between the change in modality and the timing of such a change. If we were to compare a photograph with a cartoon representation, it is the latter that is usually intended to provide the meaning that is easier for the reader to apprehend. Paul Conrad (a controversial retired cartoonist for the *Los Angeles Times*) made a statement which seems to encapsulate the idea behind a cartoon: "'I figure eight seconds is the absolute maximum time anyone should have' to understand a cartoon's meaning."⁶⁰ It could be that a photograph offering meanings which are more ambiguous and harder to apprehend was considered more suitable when the situation was happening and in progress. The cartoon representation was more suitable when the situation was resolved and it was important that the readers could grasp it more easily, as well as the intended satirical comment offered by the newspaper. One more remark could be made regarding this cartoon, which refers to the size of the represented participants. In her analyses of political cartoons El Refaie noticed that "size is commonly used to indicate the relative salience or importance of the various elements [...] and, since a difference in size is closely linked to up-down orientation, it can also imply power differentials"⁶¹ and so the use of size in Figure 20 seems to point to Bielecki's lesser importance as a former Prime Minister.

⁵⁹ Jan Bielecki – Polish Prime Minister as of January 5, 1991, until his government's resignation after the parliamentary elections in December 1991 (EastWest Institute, available at: <https://www.eastwest.ngo/info/about>, accessed: 19.09.2023).

⁶⁰ Lester, *Visual Communication: Images with Messages*, 3rd ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003), 204.

⁶¹ Elisabeth El Refaie, „Understanding Visual Metaphor: The Example of Newspaper Cartoons”, *Visual Communication 2* (2003), 1: 85, as cited in Elisabeth El Refaie, „Metaphor in Political Cartoons: Exploring Audience Responses”, in: Charles J. Forceville, Eduardo Urios-Aparisi, ed., *Multimodal Metaphor* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 176.

Figure 22. *Trybuna* nr 202 (468).
Rok wydania II, 31 sierpnia/1 września
(August 31/September 1), 1991
(‘... I will not be a puppet politician ...’)



Figure 23. *Trybuna* nr 278 (344).
Rok wydania II, 30 listopada/1 grudnia
(November 30/December 1), 1991
(Prime Minister Jan Bielecki)

Gazeta Wyborcza [Electoral Newspaper]

The definite change of modality is further visible in the way *Gazeta Wyborcza* presents politicians of the present government. All of its images found in the sample take the form of graphic caricatures. Figures 24, 25 and 26 are examples of this. The first (Figure 24) presents Wałęsa as he is choosing possible candidates that would form the government (the article comments on the lack of progress with respect to the government's formation). Figure 25 presents Wałęsa as he is jumping through the text of the constitution and tearing it apart (the article concerns the preliminary constitutional bill presented by Wałęsa which would, as a result, strengthen his position as a President). The last of the three (Figure 26) presents a caricature of Prime Minister Bielecki, and the personified building of the Polish Parliament as footballers showing each other the red card with respect to the resignation of Bielecki's government. Depictions like these seem to be indicative of the change in the newspaper's attitude regarding the public figures presented. All three figures are not only political cartoons whose purpose is to represent an aspect of political life in a humorous way,⁶² but by virtue of their genre all three seem to emphasize different aspects of the represented in their respective metaphorical representations.



Figure 24. *Gazeta Wyborcza* nr 301–302, 29 grudnia/1 stycznia (December 29/January 1), 1991
 ('No Prime Minister so far')

⁶² El Refaie, „Metaphor in Political”.

Figure 24 presents Wałęsa's choice of candidates in terms of him simply drawing the candidates as one does in a lottery. Such a representation could point to Wałęsa's choices and decisions as being uninformed, lacking reason or thought, for example. The use of size additionally indicates Wałęsa's power as he is choosing candidates that are here depicted as little creatures placed in the drawing machine. Figure 25, on the other hand, represents Wałęsa as half-animal. By virtue of such representation the emphasis seems to be placed on Wałęsa's boldness and disrespect jumping through the text of the constitution while he has just presented a new bill strengthening his own position. Figure 26 uses a metaphor from the area of sports and thus alludes to the interpretation of politics as a game. This particular representation seems to allude to Bielecki's own words as quoted in the accompanying article 'I do not agree to be the object of a surrealistic game (...)'. As has already been explained it was Bielecki and his government that resigned. The way this is represented visually makes that part of the situation rather ambiguous.

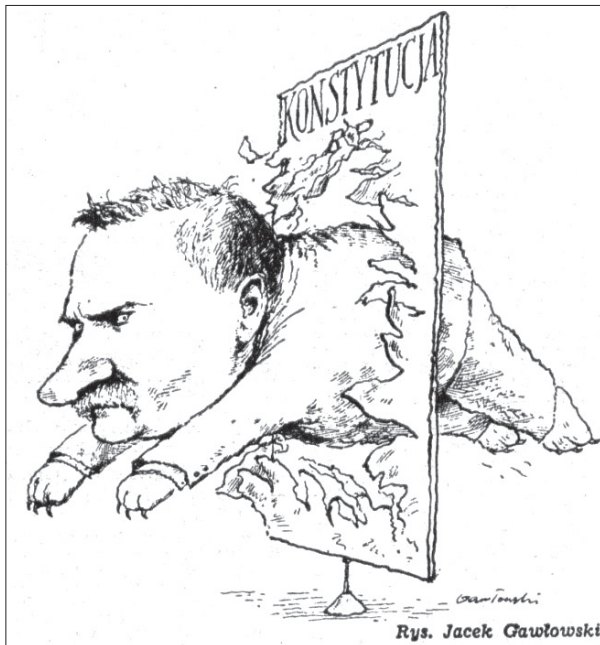


Figure 25. *Gazeta Wyborcza* nr 279, 30 listopada/1 grudnia (November 30/December 1), 1991
(Lech Wałęsa)



Figure 26. *Gazeta Wyborcza* nr 203, 31 sierpnia/1 września (August 31/September 1), 1991 ('Voting in Sejm [a Lower house of Parliament] today').

Conclusions

Before commenting on the relevance of semiotic studies such as this one let us briefly summarise the trends which emerged in the course of the analysis.

In 1950 (The building of the Stalinist model of socialism), the authorities are presented both as groups and individuals. Long shots, profile and generic group depictions and conceptual images of individuals all contribute to generalized and detached images. This might have been calculated to introduce the new authorities and to present them in a way which would induce both respect and admiration, sometimes indicating a relationship of symbolic power. This tendency changes in 1960 (The 'Classical' period of the Polish People's Republic (PRL)), which is characterized by more narrative, and higher modality images of individual members of the authorities. The change might have been intended to establish a new image, and to present the government as more approachable, rather than as a generic group of people. The distance between the viewer and the authorities is further lessened in 1980 (Period of 'diarchy' (official authorities vs. Solidarity)). Certain images present

individual members of the authorities among working people, which only adds a ‘closer to life’/ ‘down to earth’ quality. This way of presenting the authorities seems to be quite telling, especially if one considers the rather uncertain times the authorities found themselves in, most notably in relation to the emerging opposition forces. There were no images of authorities in 1982, which in the present analysis stands for the period of martial law. Later, at the time of the erosion of the system (1989) *Trybuna Ludu* [People’s Tribune] decides to emphasize and foreground depictions of the authorities as individuals by way of portraying them in medium shots, indicating a particular social relationship, while it makes group images more distanced and hence less appealing, and indeed more difficult for the viewer to relate to. *Gazeta Wyborcza* [Electoral Newspaper] (1989), in turn, consistently presents the reader with medium shots of Solidarity politicians and various foreign officials associated with them, often placing these images within the ‘Ideal’ part of the page, which might have been intended to present a homogenous and unambiguous picture of the new political forces. In 1990, a year of the first free democratic presidential elections, both newspapers (*Trybuna* [Tribune] and *Gazeta Wyborcza* [Electoral Newspaper]) feature more narrative and animated and medium shot images, while 1991, the year of the first free democratic parliamentary elections, is characterised, in the case of both newspapers, by images of a radically different modality (cartoons/caricatures) featuring individual members of the new government, the purpose of which was, it seems, to ridicule them.

The general trend then over the periods under analysis could be summarized as:

- reducing distance between the represented and the viewer,
- establishing a greater social relationship between the represented and the viewer,
- representing the authorities in terms of more animated, narrative images,
- using a radically different modality.

As for the relevance of studies such as the present one, it is mainly in its contribution to meaning and understanding within press media and understanding of historical change. First, meanings in the media, as elsewhere, are communicated by signs. Semiotics, and social semiotics in particular, takes interest in how signs work in a specific social context, problematizing the process of representation; this study does so with respect to the media. Second, signs are subject to change, as are the representations they give rise to. As mentioned earlier, these representations are not value-free and are often ideologically motivated. Because ideology is historically contingent, then from the signs that reflect it, we can elucidate particular readings and representations of history. Also, studies such as this one exemplify the validity and positive value of a diachronic perspective in considering aspects of change across time as reflected within media.

Lastly, on this study’s limitations, it needs to be remarked that any generalisations made are solely with respect to the analysed sample, which is indeed a shortcoming of any such small-scale discourse study. Finally, a remark has to be made regarding the issue of empirical truth, which a semiotic analysis cannot provide. Coupland and Jaworski point to a broader issue of whether or not discourse analysis produces unambiguous results.

“In fact”, they claim, “it is not clear that there can ever be a definitive analysis of any one sequence of discourse. One of the fundamental principles of discourse analysis is that there are no definitive readings of social and sociolinguistic events.”⁶³ More applicable to discourse analysis, as opposed to empiricist traditions, is “the notion of interpretive ambiguity and polyvalency.”⁶⁴ In light of the above views, the aim of a (social) semiotic analysis is better seen as contributing to “the understanding of the more usual human ways of interpreting signs.”⁶⁵

Finally, and going back to this study’s objective, it was to show, with the help of a social semiotic toolkit, how language, visual language in particular, can give rise to particular representations of reality. This is where this study situates its critical dimension, namely in presenting the problematic relationship between particular discourse patterns and the representations such patterns may give rise to. It is in such representations that the relationship between ideology and language becomes apparent, as indeed was the case with the analysed sample of visual newspaper discourse which both had reflected and become part of political changes Poland had undergone at different moments in its history.

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⁶³ Coupland, Jaworski, „Discourse”, 138.

⁶⁴ Ibidem.

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Representations of power in the Polish press discourse (1944–1991). A social semiotic analysis

Summary

The aim of this paper is to analyse and interpret the ways in which the authorities were represented on the front pages of three Polish dailies published between 1944 and 1991. The author examines the kinds of semiotic resources used in the representations in question. The paper also discusses the meaning potential of the identified resources alongside the possible effects such representations might have had, as well as the relationship between them and the ongoing political situation. The time period this paper takes an interest in is that from 1944 to 1991, which marks a number of defining moments in Polish history, as well as the period of communism and the breakthrough period of political transformation. The three daily newspapers which served as research data are *Trybuna Ludu* [People's Tribune], published from 1948 to 1990, the official voice of the communist authorities, *Trybuna* [Tribune], created in place of *Trybuna Ludu* in 1990 as its ideological and institutional successor, and *Gazeta Wyborcza* [Electoral Newspaper], founded in 1989 to disseminate the views of the opposition. The analysis involved examining the images primarily in terms of representational and interactive meaning, as well as some aspects of compositional meaning as described by Kress and Van Leeuwen in their grammar of visual design. The findings suggest changes in the types of depictions, involving for example, reducing distance, changed modality and a greater social relationship established symbolically between the represented – those in power, and the viewer.

Przedstawienia władzy w polskim dyskursie prasowym (1944–1991). Analiza socjosemiotyczna

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest analiza i interpretacja sposobów przedstawienia reprezentantów władzy na okładkach trzech polskich dzienników, wydawanych w latach 1944–1991. Autorka skupia się na rodzajach zastosowanych środków semiotycznych. Omawia zarówno potencjał znaczeniowy zidentyfikowanych środków, jak i możliwe efekty wynikających z nich przedstawień, a także związek pomiędzy tymi przedstawieniami a bieżącą sytuacją polityczną. W artykule wzięto pod uwagę okres od 1944 do 1991 roku, zawierający kilka ważnych dla historii Polski przełomowych momentów, okres komunizmu oraz przełomowy okres transformacji ustrojowej. Trzema analizowanymi dziennikami były: *Trybuna Ludu*, publikowana od 1948 do 1990 roku, oficjalny organ władz komunistycznych, *Trybuna* – instytucjonalny i ideologiczny następca *Trybuny Ludu*, wydawana od 1990 roku, oraz *Gazeta Wyborcza*, powstała w 1989 roku jako organ sił opozycyjnych. Wybrane obrazy zanalizowano głównie pod kątem znaczenia reprezentacyjnego i interaktywnego, jak i niektórych aspektów znaczenia kompozycyjnego, opisanych przez Kressa i Van Leeuwena w ich gramatyce komunikacji wizualnej. Wyniki badań wskazują na zmiany w sposobie przedstawień, takie jak: zmniejszenie dystansu, zmiana modalności oraz bliższa, ustanowiona symbolicznie, relacja społeczna pomiędzy ukazanymi przedstawicielami władzy a odbiorcą.

Cytowanie

Łazuka-Banach, Anna. „Representations of power in the Polish press discourse (1944–1991). A social semiotic analysis”. *Studia Językoznawcze. Synchroniczne i diachroniczne aspekty badań polszczyzny* 23 (2024): 127–160. DOI: 10.18276/sj.2024.23-09.